

VZCZCXRO4715
PP RUEHMA RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #1814/01 2111242
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 301242Z JUL 06 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3940
INFO RUCNFUR/DARFUR COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KHARTOUM 001814

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STATE FOR AF/SPG, PRM, AND ALSO PASS USAID/W
USAID FOR DCHA SUDAN TEAM, AFR/SP
NAIROBI FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA, USAID/REDSO, FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [EAID](#) [PREF](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [KAWC](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: SUDAN Q USAID MONITORING TRIP TO SOUTHERN
KORDOFAN, NORTHERN KORDOFAN, AND WHITE NILE

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Summary

1. From July 5 to 9, three USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) officials traveled to the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan, El Obeid in Northern Kordofan, and Kostî in White Nile to monitor four projects funded by USAID/OFDA. In Southern Kordofan, the team visited Lagawa and Dilling localities in western Nuba Mountains to monitor International Rescue Committee (IRC) and Save the Children/US (SC/US) projects. In Northern Kordofan, the team observed the construction of two water reservoirs being dug by community labor through a program managed by CARE. In Kostî in White Nile, the team visited an ADRA project assisting internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning to Southern Sudan after years of living in urban centers in Northern Sudan. All projects were found to be well-managed and provide important services to war and drought-affected communities. End summary.

Southern Kordofan: Strong Programs, but Greater Needs

2. USAID/OFDA Division Director for Disaster Response and Mitigation Antoinette Ferrara, USAID/Khartoum Acting Senior Humanitarian Advisor John Marks, and USAID/Khartoum Health Specialist Dr. Haidar abu Ahmed traveled to the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan, El Obeid in Northern Kordofan, and Kostî in White Nile from July 5 to 9. In Southern Kordofan, the team spent three days visiting project sites with IRC in Lagawa and SC/US in Dilling in the western Nuba Mountains. The team found that both IRC and SC/US are operating strong health, water, and community recovery programs in this area heavily affected by the North-South war.

3. The Nuba Mountains has a special significance for USAID because it was the key that opened the door to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the North-South war. During the mid and late 1990s, the Nuba Mountains was in humanitarian crisis because the civil war created dire needs, but the Government of Sudan (GOS) refused to allow humanitarian assistance to reach this area. In July 2001, at a time when the GOS-Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) peace talks were stalled, USAID asked both the GOS and the SPLM to

agree to a two-day military stand-down to permit one relief flight to deliver eight tons of U.S. wheat to a location in the SPLM zone. The parties agreed, and the flight took place August 30, 2001. USAID then requested a 30-day military stand-down to allow the U.N. World Food Program (WFP) to deliver 2,000 tons of food assistance to the entire SPLM region in the Nuba Mountains, in parallel to a distribution already planned for GOS areas. The parties also agreed to this, and 2,000 tons of food were delivered in November 2001. At the same time, U.S. diplomatic leadership in the peace process, through Special Envoy John Danforth, led to GOS and the SPLM signing the Nuba Mountains Cease-Fire Agreement in Switzerland in January 2002. Six months later, the two parties signed the Machakos Protocol in Kenya, which led directly to the CPA.

14. A second reason for the special importance of the Nuba Mountains to USAID relates to the CPA negotiations in 2004. When the peace talks in Kenya stalled over the political protocol for the Nuba Mountains and Southern Blue Nile, the international community, including the U.S. Government (USG), urged the SPLM to compromise on the political aspects in these two areas so that the overall talks could move ahead. The SPLM wanted a referendum with the option of secession for all areas that it controlled. The GOS agreed to the referendum in Southern Sudan and Abyei, but opposed it in Southern Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile. The USAID Administrator told the SPLM that USAID would give special consideration to the people of these two areas if the SPLM compromised. The SPLM compromised, the peace talks moved to conclusion, and USAID remains committed to prioritizing assistance to these two areas.

15. The SC/US program in Southern Kordofan started in

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1994, under USAID/OFDA funding, and now covers most of the Nuba Mountains with its western Nuba sub-office in Dilling. IRCQs newer and smaller program started in 2002 with co-funding from USAID/OFDA, and operates in western Nuba only from its base in Lagawa. Both programs are building new health centers, with SC/US doing a better job of linking to other resources, such as the Ministry of Health for salaries and the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) for a supply of drugs. Both programs are increasing the supply of clean water, drilling new boreholes, and repairing broken pumps at existing boreholes. IRC is conducting small-scale community improvement projects, and SC/US is providing agricultural assistance through tractor hire and the distribution of seeds. The USAID team observed that tractors hired by SC/US to plow and plant sorghum allowed farmers to boost their production threefold, from 200 to 600 kilograms for the average farmer, enough for household needs and to sell in markets. The team was told that the land is fertile, the rainfall adequate, and the people hard-working. Tractor plowing gives villagers a jump-start to get back on their feet quickly. Many people in this war-affected region were displaced during the war and have recently returned from urban centers in Northern Sudan.

16. Both IRC and SC/US work in former GOS and former SPLM areas. The USAID team observed that most communities located in former GOS areas were less affected by the war and were in much better condition than villages in the SPLM zone where the war was fought. In the SPLM zone, the infrastructure and services are poorest, and most IDPs are returning home. The imbalance between the two zones is stark. One village visited by the team in the GOS zone has 12 boreholes drilled a few years ago by UNICEF; most villages in the SPLM zone have no boreholes. Neither NGO is working in

the parts of Julud most affected by the war, although SC/US, under its current USAID/OFDA award, will extend its child vaccination program to all of Julud this year. In meetings, both in the field and in Khartoum, USAID/OFDA advised IRC and SC/US that USAID/OFDA's main interest is areas of high returns. Two activities with the greatest immediate impact in these impoverished areas are water and agricultural recovery through tractor hire.

Northern Kordofan: Water Reservoirs Near El Obeid

¶7. In Northern Kordofan, the USAID team observed the construction of two rain reservoirs being dug by community labor through a program managed by CARE. One reservoir, funded by USAID/OFDA and the USAID Office of Food for Peace (FFP), was recently finished; the other is still being constructed with funding from the European Commission. These are massive public works projects involving hundreds of laborers from several nearby communities who spend weeks digging and carrying 25,000 cubic meters of dirt, while concrete structures are built at inlets and outlets. The laborers are paid food for their work, which they need due to the poor harvests last year. An added benefit is that the project keeps wage earners in the villages where they can take advantage of early rains to plant their fields. Without this employment, most people would seek work in urban areas.

¶8. At the USAID/OFDA-funded reservoir, villagers stated that they now bring water by donkey cart from a source 5 hours away Q meaning a 10 hour trip. When the carts return with water, all the animals in the village, including chickens, run to it because they are so thirsty. These reservoirs are a major improvement in these rural communities affected by recurring drought. Their value is reflected in the villagers' eagerness to do the massive hard work that is involved in digging these reservoirs.

Kosti Wharf on the White Nile: Assisting Returnees

¶9. The final project site visited by the USAID team was the wharf in Kosti on the White Nile River, where IDPs from the North return to the South via barges. In

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Kosti, USAID/OFDA and USAID/FFP fund ADRA to provide assistance to returnees waiting at the wharf to travel South. ADRA has built a way station near the old wharf in the center of Kosti where shelter, water, latrines, and washing and medical facilities provide much-needed services to returnees. ADRA also provides food assistance and essential household items to returnees, and coordinates with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to count returnees both at the wharf and at bus stations in and around Kosti. According to ADRA, the number of returnees passing through the Kosti wharf/bus stations decreased from 2,100 in May 2006 to 1,152 in June 2006.

¶10. Traveling south by barge is dangerous because of the extremely poor conditions on the barges. These barges are cargo barges that lack adequate floor space, water, latrines or washing facilities, shelter, and passenger safety equipment. Returnees recount stories of children sometimes falling into the river and drowning. People are willing to make this difficult journey, and even rush to get on board when a barge convoy departs, because this is the cheapest transport option. Flying by air is unaffordable, and people can

take all their possessions on the barges. There is no reliable road transportation through to Juba. In Kost, returnees sometimes wait months for barges making the journey to Juba. On the barges, ADRA provides minimal protection services to children, and Fellowship for African Relief provides some water and minimal medical services, both funded by UNICEF.

11. The U.N. is not willing to get directly involved in this passenger movement because it is so far below international standards. The U.N. is prioritizing assistance to other theaters of IDP returns: Juba to Bor on the Nile and Darfur to Bahr el Ghazal by road. IOM has renovated two passenger barges that are now in use on the Juba to Bor route. Travel by barge, managed by the parastatal River Transport Corporation, is likely to improve soon. The Government of Germany has funded the renovation of 16 pushers (tug boats), and the first two of these boats should be ready in weeks. The Government of the Netherlands is funding the construction of 50 new barges to be based in Kost, and 10 should be ready before the end of the year.

STEINFELD